1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
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nothing is so startling as to be told that the Tiwi almost completely lacked what we must call "positive" magic. Such familiar mainland practices as bone pointing or "singing" a man to injury or death were completely unknown on the islands, and though references to people dying through supernatural agency were often made, it was very hard to find any positive techniques or known practitioners of such techniques. Briefly the Tiwi may be said to have believed that magical acts were possible but to have lacked any knowledge of how to perform them. If, as anthropology is wont to teach, magic is used in the simpler societies to handle and control the unpredictable or mysterious areas of life, then this absence of magic among the Tiwi needs an explanation. Our hypothesis is that the Tiwi did not use magic in human relations because they had never invented magic for use in other unpredictable areas of life—for example, to control the natural world. And they had never invented magic to control their natural world because their physical environment was on the whole a satisfactory and not a hostile universe.

If we run through the areas of life that many of the simpler peoples use magical means to control, we find that many of them were not problems for the Tiwi. The rainfall and water supply were more than adequate; the food supply was good, needing only people to come and gather it; wild animals (except snakes and crocodiles) were unknown; tropical diseases (except yaws) scarcely existed; cyclones, tornados, and earthquakes were very rare, and thunder and lightning were no more frightening there than in, say, Chicago. Death, of course, is mysterious and unpredictable everywhere, but to handle that they had most elaborate burial and mourning customs that were not magical but collective rituals. Perhaps the most favorable feature in the whole friendly Tiwi universe was the absence of any neighboring tribe. Their cultural isolation removed all fear or suspicion of what the foreigners next door might be up to, and one gets the impression from the literature, though it has not been systematically explored, that the hotbeds of magic making and sorcery were areas of the primitive world, like Melanesia or Central Australia, where people were acutely conscious of their neighbors and always expecting magic and sorcery to be directed by them across the village or tribal boundaries. The Tiwi, having no neighbors, had nobody to be suspicious of except each other, and their suspicions of each other were mostly rational suspicions, of men motivated like themselves and using the same political tricks against each other.

The strongest support for the hypothesis that the Tiwi found their environment a friendly and reassuring universe to live in comes from their wide elaboration and reliance upon the negative form of magic called taboo. As a tribe they were magic free but taboo ridden. Their generic word for anything sacred or forbidden or untouchable was *pukimani*, a word which in its most common form referred to a state of special being in which a person or thing temporarily was. Thus mourners were *pukimani* for the period of their mourning, youths undergoing initiation were *pukimani* during the ceremonies, a woman who had just given birth was *pukimani* for a week or two afterwards. Dead bodies were *pukimani* until buried; graveposts were *pukimani*

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
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while one of the "workers" pouring water over him, washed the white paint from his body (Pl. 23E).

This was the signal for another burst of hysterical mourning; the women either beat themselves with sticks or sat in groups, wailing heart-brokenly, while the men, their arms about one another's shoulders, cut one another's heads with knives. The injuries they received, however were superficial, and the cutting and self-flagellations more ceremonial than real.

After the husband danced, the significance of which I was unable to learn, everyone, men, women and children, jumped across the grave. This ritual, originally performed by *Tukimbini* at *Purukupali's pukamuni*, was supposed so to confuse the *mopaditi* of *Nulatini* that, should she leave the grave, she would be unable to find the track to her old camp. The men gave the honey, then the mosquito calls, and the burial ceremony was over.

As the relatives quietly left and returned to camp, the "workers", as in all normal burials, lit a fire for the *mopaditi* to warm herself and to cook her food. They also left water for her to drink. *Pulanimbwi*, who should have departed with the other mourners, stayed behind and watched these final rituals from the top of a nearby *pukamuni* pole (Pl. 23 D).

3. CUSTOMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE GRAVE

(1) *The Determination of the Cause of Death*

Until the performance of the final rituals, about three months after the death of *Waniamperi*, the grave (Pl. 24C), covered with layers of paper-bark, was left undisturbed, except that a screen of boughs had been erected, as instructed by *Jibungliakuni* of Bathurst Island (see message stick, Fig. 5F, G, H), so that the people walking along the motor road leading to our camp could not see it.

For the first few days after the death of *Waniamperi*, distant relatives of the dead man visited the grave and searched for some track or other indications of the cause of death; for the Tiwi, in common with the mainland aborigines, believe that death is the result of the magic of some person or spirit-being, not the result of natural causes.

The morning after the death of *Waniamperi*, someone noticed a wallaby looking at the grave. This, the aborigines assumed, was the man, who, having been responsible for the death,[80] had changed himself into a

[80] This statement requires more explanation than I can give. I do not know personally of any rituals among the Tiwi by which they can magically kill a man, although, no doubt, they exist. Harney and Elkin, 1942, p. 232, refer to a means of attracting the *matuse*-man, *Papinjawari*, to an enemy.

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
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761 [825] [761] wallaby, so that he could see the grave of his victim without being recognised.

On one occasion, when I was travelling with *Pulanimbawi*, just after the death of his wife, he went to her grave, carefully searched the ground for tracks, then lifting up the sheets of paper-bark, examined the mound. Later, *Pulanimbawi* announced that a *Marayi* (p. 154) had killed his wife, *Nulatini*, by getting inside of her body. But, although still there when she was buried, the *Marayi* had escaped through the hole *Pulanimbawi* had seen in the mound.[87]

(2) *The Seclusion of the Grave*

769 The grave of *Waniamperi* was about a hundred yards from the road between our camp and the Snake Bay aboriginal settlement. Although aborigines, who were only distantly related to the dead man, walked backward and forward along this road, all the *pukamuni* people had to take a roundabout path from which it was not possible to see the grave site.

One night, *Marawani*, one of the chief mourners, had to pass along the road to our camp. When he was approaching the position from which the grave site could be seen in the day-time, his wife, wrapping his head in a blanket, led him past the spot. This practice was only allowed at night; it was prohibited during the day.[88]

[775] [784] No aboriginal man hunted the creatures, or woman gathered the plant foods adjacent to the grave, so that, should the *mopaditi* of *Waniamperi* return to his burial place for a while he would find ample food.

4. THE PRELIMINARY CEREMONIES, THE ILANIAS

(1) *The Ilanias of Waniamperi*

765 About two months after the burial of *Waniamperi*, *Wurarbuti*, the ceremonial leader of the Melville Island people, sent message sticks to Bathurst Island aborigines telling them that the *ilanias* (preliminary rituals) of *Waniamperi* were about to start.

[123] We saw eleven of *Waniamperi's ilanias*. But, as they were more or less the same, I will describe only three.

[765] [87] *Pulanimbawi's* action was viewed with considerable disfavour. He, as a near relative, should not have gone near the grave until the final rituals. Only the *wanaras* (workers) who cut the poles are allowed to do that.

[183] [88] Under the normal tribal conditions, these precautions would have been unnecessary, because the place of burial would then have been in some distant, unfrequented locality.

13:Barclay J-3 (ca.1939)1939 OI20 Tiwi OI20

797 of North Australia, they are fond of a joke. They chuckled
522 delightedly. Father McGrath can preach in the native language,
but dear old Father Gaell (every one on the north alludes to him
[198] in these affectionate terms) must deliver his sermons in pidgin.
Sometimes this greatly amuses the congregation, and many
spirited and life-like reproductions are enacted again and again
after the service.

797 WHILE taking a walk round the grounds of the mission
753 station, an urchin of no more than three and a half years of age
● 761 was pointed out. That very morning this little fellow had
plunged into the shark-infested straits and saved his baby sister
from drowning. She was unconscious when brought ashore, and
the usual methods of resuscitation were followed by Father
McGrath, who had hurried to the scene. Then arose one of the
difficulties the mission staff are constantly encountering. All the
[754] ills that befall the islanders are attributed to magic. No black
ever dies a natural death: always there is some evilly-disposed
person responsible!

When treatment was commenced, the child had been laid on her stomach while the water was pushed out of her body. The blacks had seen an apparently drowned boy revived when laid on his back, and immediately became excited and angry. It was necessary to turn the child over for a while, otherwise the mission fathers would have been held responsible if she had not recovered. And, all the time that treatment was in progress, an old woman (very much in the way) had sung in the baby's ear.

In the opinion of the women who had gathered round, it was the singing that brought the little girl back to life, and her recovery had nothing whatever to do with the father's efforts, although he would have been held responsible if he had not been able to save her! The old men have some glimmerings of common sense, but the old women are terrible old witches and it is quite impossible to convince them.

When anyone is sick, it is the invariable custom to sing a monotonous phrase over and over again in the patient's ear to bring him back to health; and, wherever a pain is felt, it is usual to cut the skin down to the third integument to let the sickness out. On one occasion a man was suffering from acute abdominal pains, and his relations, who wanted to cut him open, came to the mission fathers to seek their approval of this drastic treatment. Here was an awkward predicament! If the sick man was cut open, he was sure to die; and, since nothing would induce him to go to the hospital at Darwin for skilled attention, he might die in any case. In either event the fathers would be held responsible. They stood firm and refused their approval. However, while the relations were hesitating in view of the emphatic assertions of the mission fathers, the man made a surprising recovery. The cure was of course ascribed to the singing, not to the good advice that kept the man on a starvation diet of water only.

755 The islanders firmly believe that they will be poisoned if they go to Darwin for treatment, but they will always trust their own people. One man, who had been employed on a pearling lugger (all the islanders are naturally good seamen), had a leg taken by a crocodile, and was forced to find some new way of making a living. He had learnt a lot too much in the years that he was away, and, on his return to Bathurst Island, he set up in practice as a witch-doctor. A woman on the point of

[p. 16(A)]